

Testimony of Tom Swan
Before the Public Health Committee

March 7, 2017

In support of SB 319, SB 442, SB 445, HB 6695, and SB 117

Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg and other members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). I am testifying today on behalf of our member families and want to thank you for raising a series of bills that will help improve the health of Connecticut.

The first bill I would like to offer my support for is SB 319 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING. It is baffling that we have not eradicated lead poisoning so many years after it was proven to be detrimental on a child's development. As part of any study we hope people would also examine what the cost has been of failing to adequately address the issue previously including no-direct costs.

CCAG also supports SB 442 AA PROHIBITING PREDATORY PRICING OF PHARMACUTICALS and SB 445 AAC PHARMACUTICAL PRICE TRANSPENCY. Pharmaceutical drug costs are growing faster than any other part of the health care system and with the growth of high deductible health plans more and more of these costs are being passed onto patients.

We are all familiar with the price gouging practices of Martin Shkreli and the Mylan EpiPen. Unfortunately, this type of behavior is all too common in this industry, along with other practices like kick back to providers and games with patents. We are confident that the legal action being led by Attorney General Jepson will show how generic drug makers are acting unethically and charging patient's exorbitant prices. Over forty states are considering proposals to reign in the types of abusive practices that these bills could address. It is good to see the bi-partisan leadership of Senator Looney and Senator Fassano in these issues and we look forward to working with you to make Connecticut a leader in protecting consumers, payors and taxpayers.

CCAG also supports H.B. 6695 An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy. This is an unethical attempt that causes depression and anxiety in young people who are often struggling to come to terms with their identity.

In closing, I want to voice our support and suggestions for SB 117 AAC COMMUNITY BENEFITS PLANS. One of the many benefits of the Affordable Care Act was having all non-profit hospitals submit to the IRS each year a Health Needs Assessment for their service area. While these reports have been uneven in CT, we were encouraged that the Attorney General and the Department of Public Health made the continuation of these to be a condition of the recent hospital consolidations approval. We believe that we should codify what should be included in these reports. Hospitals and insurers should explain what they are doing to address public health goals and progression towards these goals in their respective service areas.

Thank you and have a great day.